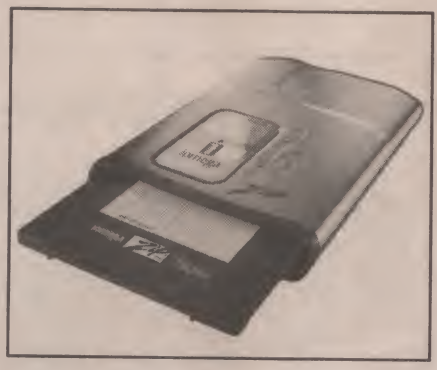
Zip 750

By Kevin Savetz

Iomega has released a new version of its Zip drive, which can store 750MB on each removable disk — three times the capacity of the previous version — and is considerably faster than earlier models. But at less than an inch high and four inches long, it hasn't gained much size in the bargain.

Accessing all that capacity (717 megabytes, according to Windows) would take too long over regular USB cables, so the Zip 750 uses the new USB 2.0 standard to speed up data transfers. Your PC will need a motherboard or upgrade card that supports USB 2.0. If your computer uses the older USB 1.1 protocol, the Zip 750 will work, although data moves at a much slower pace. In our tests, a USB 2.0-equipped PC read 685MB of data off the disk in about 4 1/2 minutes, vs. 15 1/2 minutes over a USB 1.1 connection. Write speeds didn't show quite the



same improvement: The drive took about 14 1/2 minutes to write 685 megs of data over USB 2.0, against roughly 24 minutes with the slower connection.

A FireWire version, compatible with any new Mac and some PCs, runs for $200, and Iomega says it will release an internal version of the drive soon.

If you already use a Zip drive, your old disks may work in the new drive. 250MB Zip disks work fine. The new drive can read from, but can't write to, 100MB disks, which considerably reduces the usefulness of that older media.

This attractive little gadget's competition, however, isn't other Zip hardware — it's near-ubiquitous CD-RW drives. How do they compare? Zip 750 disks hold slightly more information than CDs, their contents are easier to edit and erase, and unlike CDs, they can't be ruined by a simple scratch. But recordable CDs, sold for as little as a few pennies per CD-R and $1 or so for a blank CD-RW, cost a lot less than Zip disks, which go for $9 in the 250MB size and $11 to $15 in the new 750MB format.

The Zip 750 drive is sleek, fast and portable, but CD-RW may be a better bet.

The Zip 750 has a retail price of $180 and requires Win98 or newer, or Mac OS 8.6 or newer.

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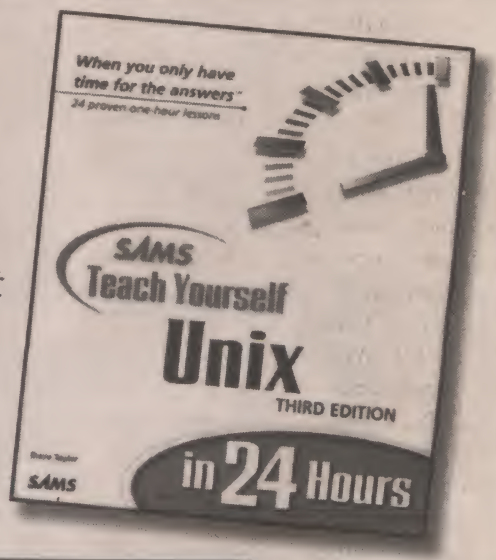

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